



HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE TOWN OF SIMSBURY
1600 HOPMEADOW STREET
SIMSBURY, CONNECTICUT 06070

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON AGING
REGARDING S. B. 3, AN ACT CONCERNING CRIMINAL BACKGROUND
CHECKS FOR EMPLOYEES OF HOMEMAKER-COMPANION AGENCIES
AND HOME HEALTH AGENCIES.**

March 3, 2011

Senator Prague, Representative Serra and members of the Committee:

My name is Joe Loewy. I am the Executive Director of the Housing Authority of the Town of Simsbury. I am also a member of the Executive Board of the Connecticut Chapter of the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials, commonly known as CONN-NAHRO.

I am pleased to present comments to you in support of S.B. 3, regarding Comprehensive Background Checks, specifically including Criminal Checks on employees of Health Care Providers.

It is the stated mission of Connecticut Public Housing Authorities to provide safe, decent, sanitary and drug free housing. To that end the more than 100 Public Housing Authorities and Non-profit Housing Agencies as represented by CONN-NAHRO passed a resolution encouraging the adoption of statutory authority requiring criminal background checks for home health aids entering Public Housing Authorities and nonprofit affordable housing developments.

In September, 2008 David Keyser, our fellow CONN-NAHRO Board Member and Executive Director of the Seymour Housing Authority received a letter from then Attorney General Blumenthal supporting mandatory background checks and sharing our "commitment to improving health care in Connecticut and protecting our most vulnerable citizens from harm and exploitation." The Attorney General followed up this commitment by testimony on February 17, 2009 before the Select Committee on Housing urging the committee to consider a "comprehensive approach by requiring all agencies that employ home health care aides, homemaker-companion service aides and homemaker-home health aides to conduct comprehensive background checks..."



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The problem of thefts and abuse by Home Health Aids has been well documented. Attached are just two samples of this from articles in the *New Haven Register*. Our own Housing Authority in Simsbury manages a 40 unit Assisted Living Facility, the Virginia Connolly Residence for elderly residents who have limited financial resources. The average age of our residents is 88 with the eldest being 100. The vast majority of our residents are from a generation that is very trusting, particularly of those who are providing them with assistance in their declining years. Many have admitted if something were missing from their apartment or if they had been threatened that they would be reluctant to report it to management.

A few years ago we did have some instances of theft that were reported to us and we suspected a Health Aid. The Simsbury Police Department investigated and was unable to bring charges against the suspected thief, which is common since there is rarely evidence of the crime other than a resident's word that money or property is missing. The Health Aide was reassigned from our facility by her Health Care Agency. Shortly before the aide left she told a member of our staff that she had a prior criminal conviction for a felony. Had her Health Care Agency been aware of this they may not have hired her in the first place or at a minimum, not assigned her to work in our facility.

This Bill includes the requirement that a criminal background check be performed by the Health Care Agencies. This is no different than the standard that the vast majority of Housing Authorities have for applicants. Our Housing Authority performs a credit and criminal background check for every single applicant offered housing. In addition, we require the same of our outside contract Housekeeping staff. We recommend that Health Care agencies be allowed to use private, affordable and timely methods to conduct these checks. Considering the current economic climate we feel that this is practical and would avoid unnecessary expense and loss of time. This approach is supported as noted in the attached remarks by the President & CEO of the Connecticut Association for Home Care & Hospice (CAHCH) to another Committee of the State Legislature.

In conclusion, it is our hope that you will approve this proposed legislation. It is supported by those of us who are responsible for caring for the elderly, those who service the elderly, our State's former Attorney General and many of your colleagues. It directly impacts one of the fastest growing and most vulnerable groups in our state; the elderly and disabled, particularly those with limited resources! Thank you.

The New Haven Register (nhregister.com), Serving New Haven, CT

Blotter

Health aide charged with theft of credit card

Saturday, February 20, 2010

MADISON — Police arrested a home health aide for allegedly using a stolen credit card.

Lucy Evans-Gray, 36, of East Hartford, was arrested on a warrant stemming from an incident in November 2008, Sgt. Jonathan Pardo said.

Evans-Gray was charged with credit card theft, receipt of money, goods or services obtained by illegal use of a credit card, forgery and making a false statement to obtain the credit card.

Pardo said he could not provide details about the case, including whether Evans-Gray's job as a home health aide was a factor in the incident that led to the charges.

Evans-Gray was released on a written promise to appear in court.

URL: <http://www.nhregister.com/articles/2010/02/20/blotter/doc4b7fcea194fc6263200821.prt>

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Past Stories

Check background of home aides

Thefts from elderly, disabled are a continuing problem.

Thursday, April 24, 2008

By A New Haven Register editorial

Thefts by home health aides from their frail and often helpless clients remain a continuing problem in Connecticut.

Early this year, two home health aides were arrested in Milford after allegedly stealing \$122,000 from a stroke victim. In 2006, a home health aide was convicted of stealing \$384,000 from an elderly Ansonia man.

Not all of the thefts have been large, nor result in arrests. Indeed, many thefts may go unreported or undetected.

Carole Gillispie learned of the theft of checks from her West Haven home when an alert employee at a New Haven bank branch called after a man tried to cash checks supposedly endorsed by her. A home health aide Gillispie had hired to care for her mother had brought a man into her home the day before the attempt to cash the checks.

West Haven police decided it could not be proved the man in the bank and the man who entered Gillispie's home were the same person. The investigating officer concluded that the man at the New Haven bank had attempted to commit the crime of larceny with a forged check. However, New Haven police refused to investigate, saying it was a West Haven crime, Gillispie said.

The New Haven police also arrested no one in a 2006 theft that has attracted the interest of Richard Blumenthal, the state's attorney general.

The day after a new health aide arrived to care for his 91-year-old mother, Eddie Monocchi, discovered \$50 to \$100 in coins were missing. Police found the aide had been evicted three weeks before from the residence where she had told her home care agency she lived. After the theft, the aide was convicted in 2007 of criminal mischief and first-degree reckless endangerment.

The state does not require background criminal checks of home health aides. Blumenthal has urged the checks since another aide stole \$340,000 from an elderly client in 1999.

Complaints about thefts by unlicensed homemaker companion agencies resulted in a 1996 law requiring them to register with the state Department of Consumer Protection. That is not enough. For the protection of the frail for whom home aides care, criminal background checks should be required.

URL: http://www.nhregister.com/articles/2008/04/24/past_stories/19920616.prt

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RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
ATTORNEY GENERAL



55 Elm Street
P.O. Box 120
Hartford, CT 06141-0120

Office of The Attorney General
State of Connecticut

*TESTIMONY OF
ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON AGING
FEBRUARY 16, 2010*

I appreciate the opportunity to support House Bill 5110, An Act Concerning Criminal Background Checks for Employees of Homemaker-Companion Agencies and Home Health Agencies.

This proposal requires licensed homemaker-companion and home health agencies conduct a criminal background check on those individuals they hire to perform services to seniors and people with disabilities in their own homes.

Since 1998, I have been urging the General Assembly to require criminal background checks on those individuals who serve some of our most vulnerable population.

Currently, we conduct criminal background checks for school bus drivers, day care operators and others who care for our children. Our seniors and the disabled deserve no less. These common-sense protections should be their right, and our responsibility.

Ongoing everyday problems show a clear and present risk for abuse and wrongdoing -- outright fraud and theft -- by home health care aides and others. We should do everything in our power to minimize this risk -- specifically to provide assurance that people who care for the sick or disabled in their homes are truly caring and trustworthy.

Many reputable, licensed homemaker-companion and home health agencies already conduct such background checks. My office worked closely with these agencies on this legislation last session. Unfortunately, the General Assembly did not approve the proposal.

I urge this committee -- for the sake of seniors and people with disabilities -- favorably consider House Bill 5110.